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African Trade

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*A Second LETTER to a Member of Parliament,
relating to the settling the TRADE to AFRICA.*

Honoured Sir,

I Am glad my former Letter convinc'd you of the Necessity of an open free Trade to *Africa*, and in obedience to your further Commands, do now send you my Thoughts on the most proper Method of providing effectually for the Security of such an open free Trade. You tell me beforehand your Opinion of maintaining the Settlements and Forts built on the Coast of *Africa*, which leaving me no room to dispute that Particular with you, I shall give you my Thoughts of it upon that Supposition. And then the whole you are to provide for is the putting those Forts into proper Hands, the giving the Royal *African* Company a suitable Recompence to the Value of them, and the future Support of them; all which are easily to be done in the following Method.

After having enacted, that the Trade shall be free and open to all *Her Majesty's* Subjects, 'twill be necessary to transfer those Forts and Castles from the present Royal *African* Company into some other Hands. This I know some Men will fire against; but if you please to consider, that this Company is in no condition to maintain them, telling the House they could hold it no longer, last Sessions: That they have for many Years past neglected them, contrary to the Intention of the Act of 9 & 10 W. 3. and that they have constantly abused them to the Oppression of the Separate Traders, who by that Act were obliged to pay great Sums out of their Pockets for the maintaining them: You will easily be satisfied of the Reasonableness of divesting them of those Forts, which they cannot hold, but to the prejudice of the Publick. When the Common Interest of the whole Nation requires the departing from a private Property upon having an Equivalent for it, the Legislative Power may, without any Hardship, provide for the Good of the Publick, by removing the Nuisance that is a Prejudice to it, and at the same time giving the private Proprietors the full Value of what they take from them. Nor is this an unprecedented Instance of their Power, there being Instances in almost every Sessions of Parliament of Acts passed for purchasing and pulling down Houses to enlarge publick Streets, for purchasing private Persons Lands to make convenient High-ways, and add to Fortifications. And it is perfectly agreeable to the strictest Rules of Justice, that particular Persons should be compell'd to such Exchanges of their private Properties for reasonable Equivalents, when 'tis for the Publick Good that they should do thus. So that the only needful Enquiry will be, where these Forts and Castles, when taken from the Company, shall be lodg'd for the Security and Advantage of the Trade. There are two Methods which would answer this End: The first is, the vesting them in a regulated Company, of which all or any of *Her Majesty's* Subjects may become Members, upon paying a small Fine; with Powers vested in them to chuse their own Managers annually, and to lay such Duties on the Trade, as are necessary to defray all the Expences of Management. The other Method, and which to me seems the most natural, and without any real Objection, is the vesting them in *Her Majesty* and her Successors, who as the common Parent and Guardian of her Subjects, will be effectually enabled to protect and encourage all her Subjects equally.

If they be thus vested in *Her Majesty*, at the same time *Her Majesty* must be enabled to maintain them, and to that end a reasonable Duty must be granted out of the Trade, which ought to bear its own Burden. What Duty you should fix on may not be so proper for me to determine; but if you'll please to have my Thoughts of it, I think you may effectually and in the best manner give it, either out of Goods exported to *Africa*, or otherwise, as the House shall think fit. 'Tis probable you cannot at first hit the precise Rate that is necessary for this purpose; but if you consider 'twill be always in the power of the Parliament to alter the Duties, Experience will soon rectify this Difficulty, and bring them to the knowledge of the just Measure of these Duties, whereby any Deficiency may be supplied out of the future Duties, by enlarging them.

In the granting of these Duties, Respect ought to be had, not only to the currant future Charge of these Forts, but to the present Interest the Royal *African* Company have in them, in order to their having out of them an ample Satisfaction for what is to be taken from them. For as these Forts are to be vested in *Her Majesty* for the Benefit of the Trade, they ought to be a part of the Burden which the Trade ought to bear, and upon that account the Sum
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they shall be valued at, ought to be charged as a Debt to the Royal *African* Company, to be paid with reasonable Interest out of these Duties; and also all other Charges that are necessary in order to the fixing the Value of them; and it will be necessary that these Duties be charged so as to defray even these as well as the future Expences, necessary for Repairing, Supporting, Supplying and Defending these Forts. The only Difficulty will be how to come at the Knowledge of the true Value of them; In this Case 'tis not reasonable that either the Purchaser or Seller should impose his own Price; and the fairest and most equitable Method, and which the Parliament have generally used upon the like occasion, will be, that the Parliament should nominate proper Persons to view and report upon Oath their Opinion of the real Value of them, with regard to all the Circumstances of them, and their Valuation, to be the Determination of the exact Sum to be given the Company for them. 'Tis true this will be some Expence, but then the Duties will pay it, according as is before provided.

To render these Provisions more effectual for all these Purposes, 'twill be proper to enable Her Majesty to borrow Money, or strike Tallies at Interest on the Credit of these Duties, from time to time, as to Her shall seem convenient, either for satisfying the Debt to the Company, the Charges of the Viewers, or the growing Charges of maintaining the present Forts.

In all this Scheme I cannot foresee any real Difficulty, it effectually and at first view providing for all the Necessities of this Case, so as to do justice to the Company for their Forts, and to lay the Burden of the whole upon the future Trade, in the most easy and reasonable Method for all Parties concern'd in it.

Give me leave Sir only to mention one thing more, which tho' it be no part of your Enquiry, yet upon this occasion may be proper for your Honourable House to take care of, and that is the Case of the just Creditors of the Royal *African* Company, which is indeed a Melancholly one, permit me only to mention my Thoughts on what is proper for you to do for them: And indeed I cannot but wish that for the preventing any further Embezelment of the Companies Effects, and for the securing to the Creditors their Shares in the same, Commissioners might be appointed either by your House, or the Lord High Chancellor, in whom all the Estate of the Company might be vested with proper Powers to enable them to examine their Accounts, get in the Debts due to them, state the Demands of the Creditors, and divide the same first to such Creditors as far as they will extend in equal Proportions, and the Residue among the Proprietors of the Stock: Which is the established Method in Cases of the like Nature.

Sir, These are but Hints of what I think proper in this Case, there are besides these several other things that will occur to you on the Debate of this Affair, which I cannot pretend to give you my Opinion in. I am so well satisfied in your Judgment and Integrity, and of the sincere Design and Ability of your Honourable House to promote the Publick Good, that I cannot but depend upon a good Issue of this Great Affair, to the Honour and Advantage of the whole Nation.

A SECOND

LETTER

TO A

Member of Parliament,

Relating to the Settling the

African Trade.